

“Single Married Divorced or Widowed,” Part 6 - 1 Corinthians 7:15-17 – February 15th, 2015

- Today's teaching will be part six of a series I've titled, "Single Married Divorced or Widowed."
- The Apostle Paul has been answering a number of questions that the Corinthian Christians had sent him a letter asking about.
- Actually, from the beginning of this chapter in verse one on through the rest of the book, Paul answers all their questions to him.

- It's important to understand that these Corinthian's were in a sense, first generation Christians who didn't have anyone to go to.
- In other words, they didn't have an auntie or uncle, let alone a father or mother with whom to bring their numerous questions.
- I suppose you could say that this was all new, and they were all new Christians with many questions about their newfound faith.

- Enter the Apostle Paul who had sort of fathered them in the faith, and as such, they looked to him for answers concerning faith.
- What's interesting is that they are asking some really good questions, in that, it shows they truly wanted to do the right things.
- It's for this reason that Paul, by the Holy Spirit, provides them practical and Biblical answers to questions like this one in v12-14.

5. What if I'm married to an unbeliever? (Verses 12-14)

- v12 Paul says if a husband as a believer has a wife that's not a believer but she's willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.
- v13 He then says to the wife who has a husband that's not a believer but is willing to stay with her she must not divorce him.
- v14 He says the reason is that the unbeliever has been sanctified through the believer, otherwise the children would be unclean.

6. What if the unbeliever leaves me? (Verses 15-17)

15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. 16 How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? 17 Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.

- v15 Paul says if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. God called us to live in peace and they're not bound in such circumstances.
- v16 He goes on to say to both the husband and wife who's married to an unbeliever how do you know whether they'll be saved?
- v17 He says the rule he lays down in all the churches is each one should live in whatever situation the Lord assigned to them.

- I trust you'll bear with me as I sort through these verses, which actually have been the source of some debate amongst many.
- Some suggest that Paul is not very clear here as to whether or not the believer is free to remarry if the unbeliever leaves them.
- I would respectfully disagree with this assertion chiefly because of where Paul says God has called us to live in peace together.

- Moreover, the law Paul lays down in all the churches is each person living as a believer in that which the Lord assigned them.
- In other words, the Lord wants us living as believers in peace, which implies that He doesn't force us to stay if we're abused.
- Sadly, many a Christian wife has been counseled to stay in a marriage with an unbelieving husband who is abusive to them.

- While this is certainly not Biblical ground to divorce them, you are not bound should they leave you, then, seek to divorce you.
- I'll take it a step further and say that if you are in a physically or even verbally abusive situation, you may need to separate.
- This because, your physical safety is at stake, and also if there are children involved, the stakes will become infinitely higher.

- Truth be made known, this may be the reason Paul would say, "how do you know that your husband or wife won't get saved.
- I'm of the belief that often times God will use the wife separating from an abusive husband, to wake him up and shake him up.
- Conversely, though not as common, God can use the husband in the life of the unbelieving wife so as to bring her to salvation.

- Be that as it may, there's something else I need to point out here, and it has to do with the unbeliever who leaves the believer.
- Again, Paul is making it very clear that the believer in this case is not bound to that marriage, and is in fact free to remarry.
- However, it's important to note that any pursuit of divorce should never be on the part of the believer. It must be the unbeliever.

Of this one commentator wrote, "Paul has counseled that the Christian partner should do what they can to keep the marriage together. But if the unbelieving spouse refuses to be married, then the marriage can be broken; but this isn't to be initiated or sought by the believer. ...If the unbelieving spouse should depart, the Christian is not under bondage to the marriage covenant. This means they are, in fact, free to remarry because God has recognized their divorce as a valid divorce."

- One final thought in closing, I am keenly aware of the many Christian wives that are married to husbands who are unbelievers.
- I would like to offer you some encouragement, first, as the Apostle Paul who asks, how do you know they won't get saved?
- In other words, don't be discouraged that they're not saved yet. Be encouraged and hang in there, God knows your heart.

Galatians 6:9 (NKJV) — 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

1 Peter 3:1–6 (NIV) — 1 Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. 4 Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.